

## **LIBRARIES, DEVELOPMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN 2030 AGENDA**

Regional workshop held in Montego Bay, 16-18 February 2017

Synopsis by Robin Kear

The International Advocacy Programme (IAP) is a new IFLA capacity-building program designed to promote and support the role libraries can play in the planning and implementation of global goals.

The workshop detailed the contribution libraries can make to development agendas, principally the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Several regional workshops have been already been held around the world with participants from 62 countries.

Librarians from ten countries in the Caribbean gathered in Montego Bay, Jamaica to learn together and create advocacy plans. Some participants were the heads of their national associations or their national libraries, and some represented other areas of librarianship in their countries. I attended this workshop as an observer and a helper to the trainers, representing the IFLA Leadership Programme.

The overall goals of the workshop were to raise awareness on the UN 2030 agenda, SDGs, and the significance of public access to information in the achievement of the SDGs. The workshop trainers gave a thorough understanding of the UN2030 agenda and how to identify stakeholders in their own countries. It helped participants develop a national advocacy plan and create plans to meet with library associations, local governments, national governments, and community groups.

The UN development agenda has evolved over the past 20 years. Eight Millennium Development Goals have guided the world for the last 17 years on national and local levels. Progress in these goals did happen and were most effective when everyone worked together globally. The 2012 UN Sustainable Development Conference in Rio (Rio+20) was an important conference that considered environmental issues and wanted to expand the worldwide goals to advance society. Open forums and a more democratic process was created to scope the goals; 5 million people were involved in the process. The 2030 SDGs were born to advance 5 main areas: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships. The 17 goals and 169 targets are interdependent. The library is explicitly mentioned in goal 16, target 16.10

access to information. Timely, current, and accurate open data is needed to measure these goals and tell stories. Libraries can assist with this in a variety of ways.

The role of libraries in the UN 2030 is significant and we can directly or indirectly support many of the goals and targets. Libraries also are uniquely positioned to raise awareness of the SDGs with their broad reach into communities. The IFLA IAP regional workshops are preparing librarians to make a difference in their own countries and will have a wide impact. There is a toolkit and booklet available from the IFLA website; along with templates and social media channels (#Lib4Dev). Strides are already being made in several countries, including some with National Development Plans to address the 2030 SDGs. For example, Jamaica has created a Vision 2030 national development plan that states what is most important for them from the SDGs. They have their own national outcomes and targets. Finland created a national report on the implementation of the 2030 agenda as well.

Libraries facilitate access to information and have an impact across the whole 2030 agenda. We promote the rights of citizens, develop relevant collections, model standards of information ethics, and give access to technology. We need to loudly and consistently advocate these contributions to the world's development. National development plans will shape government spending programs and priorities and we need to be part of it. We need to increase awareness and give clear statements of the critical contribution we can make and have clear examples of good practice and evidence to support our claims. Libraries are well positioned to work across society.

One way to accomplish our goals in the agenda is to be an effective advocate. Advocacy is speaking up to influence decision making to create a desired change. It is having a clear, simple, consistent message to the right person at the right time. Every library staff person should be an advocate, it is not just for library directors. There are various levels of influence to consider: local, national, regional, global, and the private sector.

Advocacy is a long-term strategy with different steps.

- Step one is to identify and analyze the issue. What problem do you want address? How does this relate to the SDGs? How does this relate to the goals of your national association or your national library? Step two is to set the goals and objectives. What is the ultimate goal? What specific objectives do you want to achieve?
- Step three is to identify the decision makers at local, regional, and national levels. Who has the ultimate say? Who do you need to influence? Meetings with these decision makers requires preparation and practice.
- Step four is to define your message and your proposal. Developing a quick speech on how to quickly and clearly explain your mission is important to carry in your mind with you at all times. It should be short, simple, and specific.
- Step five is to set a timeline. How are you going to get this done? What considerations and challenges to you need to account for?
- Step six is to assess resources, choose tactics, and implement. A communications plan is essential for different constituencies including members, stakeholders, ministers, and the media.
- Step seven is to monitor, evaluate, and share. How do you know that you have succeeded? How do you know when to change course? Can you tell a great story and have data and measurements to prove it? How are you going to celebrate it?

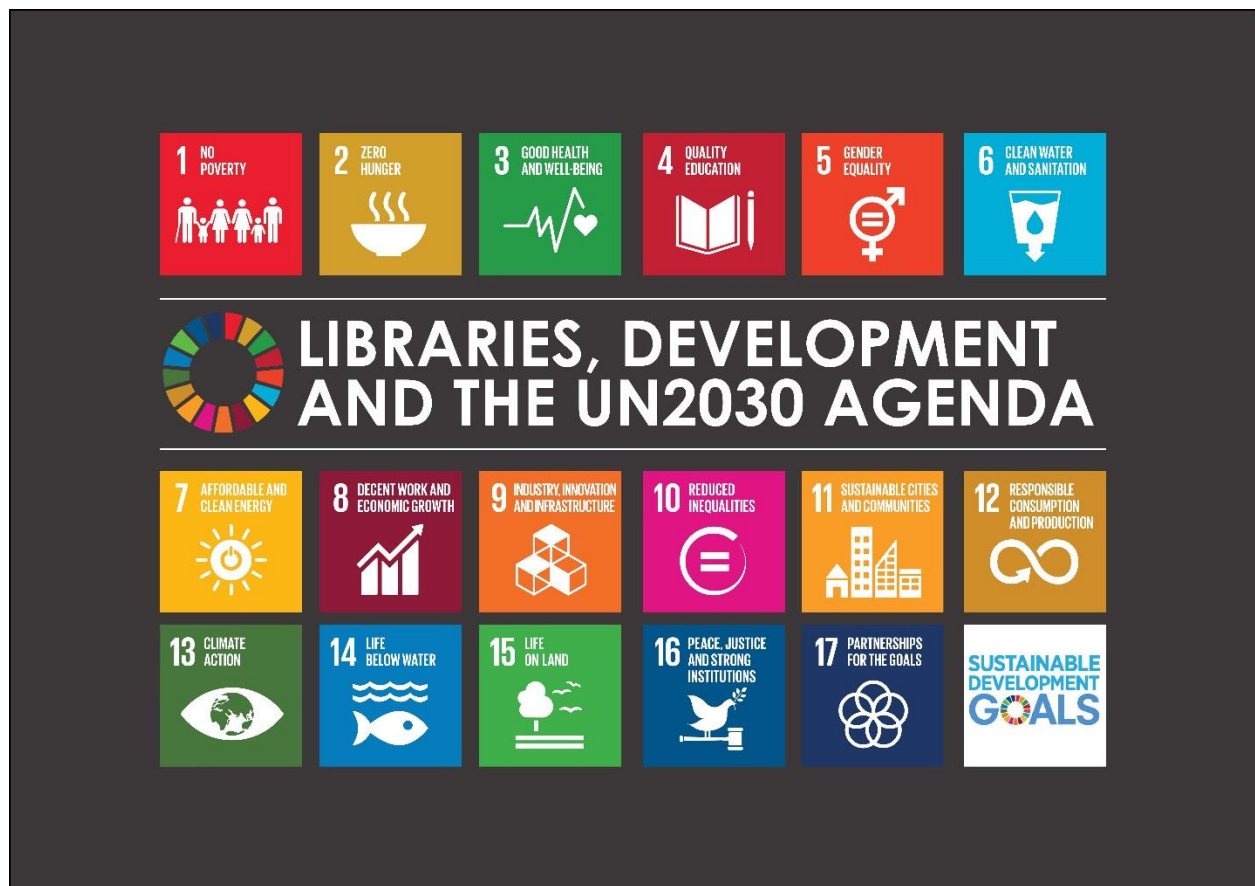
The project plan presentations that came out during the workshop were varied, ambitious, and impactful. Mentioned universally was the necessity of awareness raising for presidents of library associations, ministers, policy makers, and other government workers. A few mentioned that their advocacy plans relate directly to their national association's strategic plans. There were event invitations to SDG action forums announced and timelines presented. Some countries libraries were not included in national development plans yet and some concluded that they need to advocate for the creation of the

national development plan in the first place. Ministers in the Caribbean tend to focus on education aspects and librarians need to remind them of our role in education to stay in their consciousness. Foundations and corporate sponsors will mentioned as partners. SDGs mentioned were: number eight, promotion of inclusive economic growth, to implement skills training programs for successful employment; number four, inclusive and equitable quality education by offering reading programs and literacy programs for children and adults; number one, ending poverty; number three, ensuring healthy lives; and number sixteen, inclusive and peaceful societies accomplished in part through equitable access to information.

Other issues mentioned that libraries can help peripherally with through SDG work are the reduction of child labor, reduction of poverty, crime, and violence, and inclusive economic growth. An ambitious goal presented was a library for every municipality in a country that does not have them and to start awareness with a national declaration of the importance of libraries. It was mentioned that one voice and one message for libraries will be most effective; if a country has various library representatives from different areas they should work together. Flexibility is also key. From one enthusiastic presentation on communicating what libraries can do: “We’re going to brag; we’re going to blog; we’re going to do it ‘bigly’ [intentional use of term].” I think this was a great sentence that captured one of the themes, effective and efficient communication, of the entire workshop.

The work of these librarians is by no means over and there is always much work to be done to advance libraries around the world. I feel that this workshop helped prepare these particular librarians with new tools for this work. It also helped to create a regional network for knowledge sharing and support. The workshop also created or reinforced a shared sense of purpose and I enjoyed it immensely. For my part, the United States does not have a national development plan or an office dedicated to a national response to the SDGs. There are many areas of the SDGs where the United States can improve including equitable education, improving literacy, a peaceful society, and inclusive economic growth.

Individual groups in the U.S. are addressing aspects of the SDGs and hopefully our national association (American Library Association) will be one of them.



<http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/ifla-poster-sdgs.pdf>